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# Let's Get All the Facts

None of the congressional inquiry committees now has plans to look into the activities of the controversial John Birch Society, but one of them should undertake an investigation of that ultra-conservative organization. While an inquiry should not interfere with the society's freedom of expression, it at least could expose to public view its questionable defamatory procedures.

Few would find fault with the aims of the organization as announced by its founder—the destruction of communism. But there is reason to question the methods it uses. Its tactics, as disclosed in recent weeks, bring to mind the smear campaigns of "McCarthyism" at its worst. Those who question the society and its procedures are themselves branded as being part of a "pro-Communist smear." The disclosures of society activities indicate that radicals of the right wing can be just as irresponsible and damaging as left-wing extremists.

The society should be called to account for its characterization of former President Eisenhower as a "dedicated, conscious agent of the communist conspiracy." Former President Truman, the late John Foster Dulles, Allen Dulles, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, and several congressmen have been victims of its attacks. It is conducting a campaign aimed at impeachment of Chief Justice Earl Warren because "wrong" decisions in 36 of 39 cases involving communism mark him as being "soft" on communism. Many of the decisions, "wrong" by the society's standards, were made to safeguard our basic freedoms.

The stature of these victims of the society's attacks, their experience and their service to the country stand as a strong refutation of the accusations made against them. But what of lesser known people who might be smeared without cause? What kind of defense would they have against such groundless attacks?

Rep. Kenneth W. Hiestand of California, who admitted membership in the society, said, "My advice is for people not to sound off before they have all the facts." But the John Birch Society has been so secretive about its membership and its financing that little is known of it. This is exactly why it should be brought under investigation—so that the people will have the facts about its operation and the accusations it makes.

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